

CHARISMATIC PRAISE MUSIC: MANIPULATING ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

January 8, 2000 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, wayoflife.org, fbns@wayoflife.org) - The following is excerpted from an excellent article by Alan Morrison (pastor of the International Baptist Church in Eindhoven, the Netherlands) entitled "The New Style of Worship and the Great Apostasy." [Used by permission, Diakrisis International, Bordeauxlaan 41, Achtse Barrier, 5627 GR Eindhoven, The Netherlands, AM@diakrisis.org (e-mail).] The entire article is available on the Diakrisis web site at <http://www.diakrisis.org/articles.htm>.

FROM GLORIOUS HYMNS TO MANIPULATIVE MUSIC

By Alan Morrison

Whereas at one time hymns would be expressing the worshipful hearts of the congregation towards a glorious and awesome God -- the whole thing has been turned around so that songs are chosen in order to induce feelings in the worshippers. In other words, music is being used to alter the feelings of the person rather than the person simply expressing his or her worshipful feelings in song. In fact, there has been a movement from the centrality of the worshipping mind (cf. Mk. 12:30) to the inducement of an altered state of consciousness by flagrant manipulation.

It is important to realise that the bulk of the New Style of Worship songs have been written by people who are ardent advocates of Charismatic teachings which previous generations of believers rejected as "fanaticism" and "enthusiasm". These songs have been composed for the deliberate purpose of seeding their teachings in churches. In other words, the New Style of Worship is promotional and what it seeks to promote is another gospel and a form of Christianity which is very far removed from the Bible, although the majority of professing Christians today are unable to recognise that.

The New Style of Worship songbooks have been deliberately published in order to effect a change in churches to this new form of Christianity. One only has to read the books written by the major advocates and composers of the New Style of Worship to be convinced of that.

In their misplaced attempt to be "relevant" to today's culture, churches which buy into these new songbooks are importing heresy into the heart of the fellowship. People need to realise that this isn't about a cosy debate concerning which songs to use in your church, on which we can agree to differ. This is warfare! This is why resistance to the New Style of Worship and the trivial choruses associated with it is not merely an option, but it is vital, if we are to avoid having the Church plunge even further into the theological crisis which has largely been promoted through hymnodic changes in recent decades.

As a graphic illustration of the kind of "Christianity" which lies behind the new hymnody, consider the following interview with that veteran of the New Style of Worship, Graham Kendrick, conducted by the supremo of the cult-like Jesus Army Fellowship, Noel Stanton:

NS: "What are the landmarks in your life?"

GK: "I remember when I was about five years old my mother reading us a bedtime story which included a simple explanation of the gospel and asking us if we wanted to invite Jesus to forgive our sins. I remember kneeling down by myself and praying. I felt an excitement deep inside me that surprised me. During teenage years I began to examine if it was first hand or second hand".

NS: "You were a rebel?"

GK: "It was the 60s and I tended towards the cynicism of the time. Certainly I was determined to discover more".

NS: "Did that lead to Baptism in the Spirit?"

GK: "I've never been a crisis person but I came out of one particularly drab Christian Union meeting at college thinking 'There must be more than this'. So I set out to seek for more of God. I had met one or two people who seemed to have been profoundly affected by the Holy Spirit. I tracked down a housegroup and knocked on the door, not knowing anybody there, and asked people to pray for me afterwards. It was later that night when I was cleaning my teeth ready to go to bed that I was filled with the Holy Spirit! That was a real watershed in my Christian experience".

NS: "When was this?"

GK: "It was about 1971, when the charismatic renewal movement was in its early days and was quite controversial. Lots of people would warn you off and say it was of the devil! Tongues were as controversial then as the current manifestations of shaking and falling are now" (*Jesus Life Magazine*, from the Jesus Army Fellowship website at <http://www.jesus.org.uk/kendrick.html>. This interview was also reproduced on "The Graham Kendrick Website" under the link "Graham's Christianity").

This brief testimony displays all the inadequacies and dead-ends of the modern understanding of what it means to become a Christian. While we are aware that such interviews do not necessarily contain every facet of a person's conversion, the fact remains that -- having been asked to identify the landmarks in his Christian life, Mr. Kendrick places the emphasis not on the holiness of God, the demands of the Gospel or the atonement of Christ but on his own feelings and experiences. This is symptomatic of a grave crisis in the modern evangelical scene, and one which has worked its way into churches through the New Style of Worship songs which they sing today. We have no desire to enter into ad hominem contentions, but it is surely valid for us to highlight what we believe to be unhealthy and even dangerous ideas in the testimony of a keynote composer in the New Style of Worship scene, who plainly wields considerable influence over gullible and vulnerable young people.

Firstly, while there is a verbal mention of sin and forgiveness in this interview with Kendrick, there is not the slightest indication of true repentance and an understanding of what sin is all about. Surely this is the most important aspect of a conversion experience, as shown in those examples in the Early Church, when folk were "cut to the heart" (e.g. Acts 2:37). While we do not at all deny that small children can be regenerated and converted -- recognising that their understanding of the Gospel will not be identical to that of a university professor -- there must surely be a real awareness first of the need for forgiveness and a subsequent desire for repentance, otherwise conversion becomes a mere mental assent.

(It should be pointed out here that there are two equal and opposite errors into which we can fall on the experience of conversion. One is what is known as 'Sandemanianism' -- named after Robert Sandeman, 1718-1771, the Scottish minister who first publicly propounded this doctrine -- which involves the idea that a person merely needs to give verbal assent to the propositions contained in the Gospel in order to be saved, without any evidence of a heart change or regeneration. The other is what we can call 'Preparationism' -- whereby a person is persuaded of the need to enter into a massively over-prolonged (or even indefinite) period of intense preparation for conversion, during which he must go through the most oppressive heart-searching rigours, without which he cannot be saved. We must always be sure that our evangelism does not encourage either "easy-believism" or its opposite: bondage-making preparationism. They lie at contrary ends of the spectrum, but both are deadly, conversion-stifling errors.)

Secondly, a child who is genuinely regenerated will surely not subsequently become an adolescent rebel, with a tendency to partake in "the cynicism of the time", as Kendrick puts it. It seems to be taken for granted in so many evangelical churches today that even youngsters who profess Christianity will still go on to be teenage rebels who need to express themselves in rock music, foppish clothes, and the raucous multi-media experiences of the world. But such out-and-out rebellion belongs to the fallen nature and should not be a feature in a believer's life of any age.

Thirdly, in this testimony, there is that typical feature of neo-evangelicalism: the desire for increasingly exciting experiences. Regardless of what Mr. Kendrick says here, he was indeed a “crisis person” who was seeking a “crisis experience”. Is there not a link here back to that early prayer of his which engendered “an excitement deep inside me” but which apparently failed to kindle godly sorrow and contrition? The Christian Union meeting, he believed, was not good enough for him. But instead of seeking out some orthodox Christians who promote sound doctrine to point him in the right direction, like so many immature, misguided seekers he goes in search of sensational “pyrotechnics”. From the present writer’s experience of this kind of complaint, that “particularly drab Christian Union meeting at college” could easily have been made up of godly youngsters singing hymns in the old-style and bowing quietly in prayer before the Lord (without the almost mandatory trance-induced arm-waving and gibberish kind of “tongues-speaking” one finds among most university and college Christian Unions today). This is considered dull and boring in the kind of circles where CCM is extolled, and especially among carnal youngsters who have been processed on the easy-believist conveyor belt of evangelism.

The housegroup scene has always been a pastoral minefield, and if you go down that pathway you are far more likely to wind up in a cult rather than a sound assembly!

Fourthly, the account of being “filled with the Holy Spirit” is decidedly suspect. Christians are certainly instructed to “go on being filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18) throughout their Christian lives; but it is so typical of the sensation-seeking, crisis-loving evangelicals of today to highlight one incident as their supposed “baptism in the Spirit”. And is it not strange that what Kendrick describes as “a real watershed” in his Christian experience should occur entirely as an incidental experience while he happened to be “brushing his teeth”? Frankly, we find it hard to credit the fact that in a serious interview, designed to display the testimony of the work of God in his life and his faith in the Son of God, we should read such a flippant narrative. This is entirely in keeping with the superficial nature of the New Style of Worship as a whole; and the question must be asked here: Is it right for churches to worship God from a hymnbook of which almost 10% of the songs were written by a man whose testimony would not even obtain membership for him in our churches? (Mission Praise contains 8.5% of Graham Kendrick songs. Songs of Fellowship contains 10%.)

Surely there is a clear connection between the truncated “Christianity” of this “conversion” experience, and that which the New Style of Worship is promoting in churches today. This is a plain example of “easy believism”, with a subsequent psycho-religious catharsis masquerading as an “infilling of the Spirit”. Such phenomena form the undergirding theology which governs the style and content of the New Style of Worship songs, which are deliberately manipulative of a bogus spiritual experience. A person who has had a superficial “conversion” experience will always spend his or her time seeking a more profound “second blessing”. Consequently, in place of the simple desire for reverential praise of the Triune God, we find that the search for an ever-greater “high” also becomes the goal of worship. Hence, these songs are often used to bring a person into what is known as an “altered state of consciousness”.

In fact, the modern idea of going to church to worship on a Sunday is that one must enter an altered state of consciousness (or ASC) in order for worship to have occurred at all! In his pro-“Toronto Blessing” book, “Signs of Revival”, charismatic church elder Dr. Patrick Dixon claims that ASCs “seem to be a normal, common part of Christian prayer and worship” (Patrick Dixon, *Signs of Revival*, Kingsway, 1994, p. 275) and that unbelievers will be more open to a personal relationship with God if they can be put into an ASC (*ibid.*, p. 266). Dr. Dixon, who also describes the modern charismatic “tongues” experience as “emptying the mind of logical, language-related thought, and helping to induce a trance-like state” (*ibid.*, p. 275) is a leading medical writer in the Christian scene, and a vigorous advocate of the use of ASCs in Christian life and worship. In an article in a major U.K. newspaper, he wrote:

"The human brain has three states: waking, sleeping and somewhere in between. It is in this third state that we usually have our most profound spiritual experiences, when awareness fades of the immediate and we become sensitised to another dimension" (*The Independent*, Saturday 18th February 1995, p. 14; an article entitled "It is not Insanity when MPs Bark or Roar").

Elsewhere, Dr. Dixon states that although altered states of consciousness do not actually bring us into God's presence, they can "make us aware of a presence to be brought into" (Patrick Dixon, *Signs of Revival*, p. 277.). The advocacy of the use of altered states of consciousness for Christian life and worship is a serious departure from the orthodox historic Christian faith, and has far more in common with the occult and the New Age.

Entering an altered state of consciousness induces an "Alpha-wave brain state", and the production of euphoria-inducing endorphins in the body. Normally, during the focused consciousness of wakeful existence, the brain-wave pattern registered on an electro-encephalograph is described as 'Beta', which is between thirteen and twenty-six cycles per second. However, another brain-state has been identified in which there is a more diffuse awareness, registering between eight and thirteen cycles per second. This is what the yogi and the mystic seek to attain through meditation. This Alpha-wave brain-state is, in fact, a pre-hypnotic state in which a person is extremely open to suggestion - human or otherwise; and it has nothing to do with "coming into the presence of God". One New Age meditation manual describes this altered state of consciousness as "floating, pleasant blankness, or shifting consciousness, peaceful meditation" (Ray Van Over, *Total Meditation: Mind Control Techniques for a Small Planet in Space*, Collier Macmillan, 1978, p. 107).

In keeping with the mantra-chanting mysticism of both East and West, Dr. Dixon says that "Repetitive praying or liturgy can also settle brain activity, bringing tranquillity or spiritual openness" (*The Independent*, Saturday 18th February 1995, p. 14). All this has nothing whatsoever to do with true spirituality. Such a state can easily be induced with a biofeedback machine, cannabis or occult meditation. It is the "Alpha-wave" feeling of well-being induced by these rhythmic breathing and mantric exercises which the person experiences, and then imagines to be the "presence of the Lord", which, if such was really the case, would be more awesome than can be imagined!

We are drawing attention to these views about ASCs because they have largely conditioned the direction of Charismatic worship in many evangelical churches today. And the use of the New Style of Worship songs has played a major part in this. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that Graham Kendrick speaks with approval of the benefits of the increasingly-popular use of repetitive Taizé chants in worship (Jesus Life Magazine interview with Graham Kendrick, taken from the Jesus Army Fellowship website which can be found at <http://www.jesus.org.uk/kendrick.html>).

In a CNN news item entitled "New Religion Uses Chants and Meditation for Worship", it was reported:

"A hunger for spirituality is leading people to a new type of worship that focuses on chanting and meditation... 'There seems to be a hunger for this kind of spirituality,' says Sister Suzanne Toolan, who offers Taizé services at the Mercy Center, a Catholic church in the San Francisco Bay area where hundreds come to participate in Taizé services each month... 'You repeat it over and over again and it becomes more and more relaxing', says Toolan. 'And you go from whatever your state of consciousness is to a much more relaxed state of consciousness' (CNN correspondent Susan Reed, writing in a CNN Web News posting on May 20, 1996. Dr. George Carey is also into Taizé).

So the Taizé New Age chants which so appeal to monks in France and trendy Catholics in San Francisco are also approved by the man who is the most popular New Style of Worship songwriter in the U.K. today. This should not surprise us, given that so much of this style of worship is highly

manipulative of the human mind, which its exponents are using to induce altered states of consciousness in Christian congregations.

Surely, if you have an entire congregation indulging in the current fashion for waving their arms about above their heads with their eyes closed, plainly in some kind of trance, it is most unlikely that any real worship is taking place. Although many may regard such congregational arm-waving as a secondary issue, the fact is that to lead an assembly into trance represents an assault on the centrality of God in worship.

To encourage a congregation to get lost in a mystical fog and then pretend it is an act of worship before God is, at the very least, what Scripture refers to in the Greek as *ethelothreskeia*, rightly translated as “will-worship” in the A.V. (Col. 2:23) and defined in one Greek lexicon as “worship which one prescribes and devises for himself, contrary to the contents and nature of faith which ought to be directed to Christ”.

The irony is that if one’s relationship with God was truly God-centred rather than self-oriented, one would not have to resort to any humanistic techniques of ASC-inducement via repetitive or soporific songs in order to approach the Throne of Grace. The reason that the modern Charismatic needs to enter an ASC is because of a failure to rest on the simple promises of the Bible to those who wish to approach the Lord in prayer or worship (Rom. 5:1-2; 8:15; Heb. 4:16; 10:19; Eph. 2:18). Christian prayer is primarily discursive, a conversation between a creature and his Creator (cf. Acts 16:25). It is not bodily relaxedness which determines the quality of the believer’s prayer-life but, rather, total dependence on God and an awareness of His cosmic transcendent power. The substitution of the seductive inducement of Alpha-waves for the saving power of the true Alpha (and Omega) is an entirely self-centred and Spirit-less exercise.

Such is the movement which has taken place in recent years, using the New Style of Worship for manipulative ends.